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INFORMATION CIRCULAR

To: Members of the staff

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for General Services

Subject: OPERATING SYSTEM SOFTWARE TO BE USED ON PERSONAL COMPUTER LOCAL AREA NETWORKS

1. Microcomputers are playing a significant role in office automation. In the United Nations Secretariat, microcomputers can be and are networked in a variety of ways today: with a direct cable or dial-up connection to the mainframe, with a direct cable or dial-up connection to a minicomputer or in local area network (LAN) configurations.

2. LANs allow microcomputers to be used much more effectively and to share resources such as data files, word-processing documents, printers, communications lines and other equipment. This shared environment of networking personal computers is referred to as a workgroup. Workgroups can be linked together to form an infrastructure to create an integrated network of microcomputers at Headquarters.

3. Based on the findings of an in-house study, Banyan VINES has been selected as the preferred software package for LAN microcomputers at Headquarters. The reasons for this selection were (a) its ability to operate over such standard wiring components as Ethernet and Token-ring, (b) architectural excellence, permitting the building of an organization-wide multi-server LAN, (c) ease of use and (d) compatibility with existing software and hardware standards for office automation. Adherence to one LAN software package will minimize costs and achieve maximum compatibility. It is recognized that conditions at individual offices away from Headquarters may necessitate the use of other LAN operating systems.

4. All offices that are planning to introduce LANs are expected to use Banyan VINES as the LAN operating system. Those offices that already have personal computer LANs in place using different products are encouraged to migrate from the existing environment to Banyan VINES, if it proves to be technically feasible. The Electronic Services Division of the Office of General Services will be available to consult with such offices for this migration process.

5. The Electronic Services Division has arranged for a cabling and networking strategy study to be carried out as a first step towards a true multi-vendor network under an open systems architecture plan. This network will eventually include such new applications as the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS), the optical disk system for the storage and retrieval of United Nations documents and electronic mail.

6. Plans for IMIS take into account the existing office automation infrastructure. Some users will require access to IMIS data as well as to their office automation applications (word processing, spreadsheets, etc.). These users will be provided with a graphical user interface (GUI), which allows them to move easily between IMIS applications and office automation applications, regardless of where the application resides. The Banyan LANs established for office automation applications allow for co-existence with the networks that are proposed for IMIS.

7. Technical consultation and analysis of user applications on LANs can be arranged by submitting a written request to the Director, Electronic Services Division. Once the study has been completed and it is found that a LAN is an effective and feasible solution for the office, a formal request for a LAN installation should be submitted to the Office Automation Section, Technological Innovations Service, Electronic Services Division, according to the procedure outlined in administrative instruction ST/AI/355. The Office Automation Section is responsible for the acquisition, installation and maintenance of LANs.